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**THE BRITISH IN KENYA (1952-1960): ANALYSIS OF A
SUCCESSFUL COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN**

by

John Alexander McConnell

June 2005

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Anna Simons
George Lober

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COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN**

John A. McConnell,
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.S., University of Idaho, 1999

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**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2005**

Author: John Alexander McConnell

Approved by: Anna Simons
Thesis Advisor

George W. Lober
Second Reader

Gordon McCormick
Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Following WWII the British Government reduced its colonies due to rebuilding costs and a waning interest in costly overseas colonies. During this time there were approximately 30,000 white settlers living in Kenya with nearly 5 million Kikuyu and Maasai. Unrest had been building in this area long before the 1950s due to Britain's perceived lack of interest in the well being of the native populations. Given the recently implemented apartheid movement in South Africa, many natives felt this was the path down which Kenya was headed.

By 1952 it was obvious to the British Government that there was great unrest among the Kikuyu population in Kenya. As with the Malayan Emergency, the British had been caught off guard and failed to recognize the scale of the threat Mau Mau posed.

On 20 October 1952 a state of emergency was declared in Kenya. Throughout the following eight years several programs were implemented by the British to return the colony to a state of normalcy, including widespread detention, compulsory registration of Kikuyu, livestock seizure, taxes for the additional cost of the insurgency, re-education measures, the use of reformed Mau Mau and local troops to combat the insurgency, and eventually the capture and execution of Mau Mau leader Dedan Kimathi in 1956. The emergency would remain in effect, however, until 1960.

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I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

A. THE BEGINNING OF BRITISH INFLUENCE IN AFRICA

1. British Expansion into East Africa

The idea of colonizing foreign lands for profit, resources, land, power, women, or militaries, is a concept as old as civilization itself. For centuries, however, man was greatly impeded by the inability to travel great distances. Then in the 15th century the great explorers, with the aid of new technology, began to “open up” lands previously thought inaccessible. With this new ability and expansiveness came the idea of overseas trade and commerce, and the race was on to reap the riches of far away lands. Although colonial expansion by Europe had been occurring since the late 15th century, the 19th and early 20th centuries erupted with European colonial fever. Countries, including France, England, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Belgium, were racing to extend their colonial reach to Asia and Africa.

To the colonial powers, Africa was a land of immense space and rich with natural resources and agricultural potential. British interest in East Africa began as early as the 1880’s when the British began to push inward from their earlier Arab settlements. Kenya, in East Africa, was soon to be in the sights of the colonial British. The fertile coastal country borders the Indian Ocean and lies directly on the equator. Kenya is a relatively small country measuring only about 30,000 square miles, but with jutting topography ranging from sea level to 17,000 feet at the top of Mount Kenya (see Figure 1). Within Kenya lie jungles, mountains, fertile farming lands and pastures, scrublands, and, vast arrays of game animals and, at the time nearly eight and one quarter million indigenous people. These people comprised approximately 27 major tribes, some nomadic and others agrarian, but all with deep ties to their native land. (Kitson, 1977, p. 3).

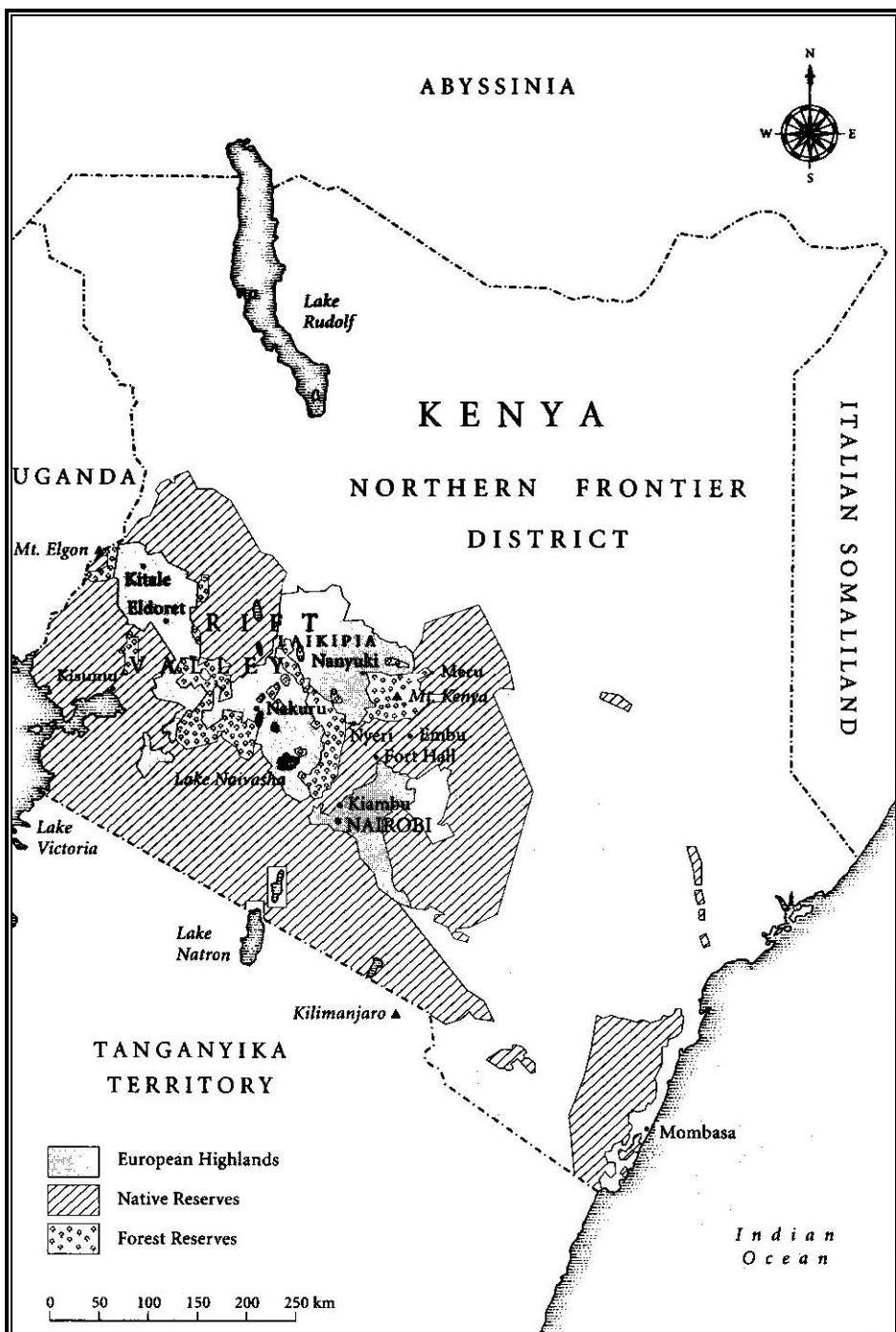


Figure 1. Kenya, circa 1953. From *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, by David Anderson, 2005. Copyright W.W. Norton and Co. 2005. Reprinted with permission.

The Congress of Berlin (1884-1885) split the African Continent among the major European countries with an interest in colonization, including: Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium. When the conference had concluded, and Africa had been divided, Queen Victoria ruled the most expansive territory ever controlled by Great Britain. Britain also added to its colonies areas in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, which, when combined with colonies in Australia and New Zealand, India, Hong Kong, the Caribbean, and Canada, made England the greatest land power in the world, ruling over 25% of the earth's land masses (Elkins, 2005, p. 5). However, these colonies and the cost of supporting them with men, materiel, and military protection came at a great price for the island nation. In order to continue occupying and protecting such far-flung areas the colonies would not only have to pay for themselves, but reap a profit to finance domestic and industrial efforts at home.

The British East Africa Protectorate was not originally viewed as attractive for colonization, but the government was receiving pressure to recoup the expense of the rail system and the building of infrastructure. Originally, a Zionist state in East Africa was proposed as a homeland for European Jews, a plan that never came to fruition. Shortly thereafter, Britain launched a campaign to attract British settlers to the area to take advantage of the rich agricultural potential in the Kenyan pastoral lands and make use of the rail system already in place (as cited in Elkins, 2005, p. 3). Several campaigns took place to lure new settlers to Kenya, one of which included posters that advertised the following:

Settle in Kenya, Britain's youngest and most attractive colony. Low prices at present for fertile areas No [sic] richer soil in the British Empire. Kenya Colony makes a practical appeal to the intending settler with some capital. Its valuable crops give high yields, due to the high fertility of the soil, adequate rainfall and abundant sunshine. Secure the advantage of native labor to supplement your own effort (as cited in Elkins, p. 3).

Eventually advertisements and campaigns like the one above would lure thousands of British to East Africa to seek their riches in cattle, coffee, mining, and selling safaris to tourists.

While the other colonial powers set their sights on other areas of the Dark Continent, England began colonizing East Africa, to include the British East Africa

Protectorate (what would become Kenya in 1920) in earnest during the first decade of the 20th century. Colonial towns such as Nairobi began to spring up throughout Kenya mainly around the fertile pastoral lands and at railheads. During these early years the British government financed the laying of 582 miles of railroad track from the coastal town of Mombassa to Lake Victoria, the headwaters of the Nile, and beyond at a cost of over 6,500,000 British Pounds. The original impetus behind the rail system was to provide for the transport of military forces to the Nile and neighboring Uganda where Britain's then-rival Germany had colonies and military forces. The fear was that Germany might dam up the Nile, causing the decimation of Egypt, and thereby forcing the British to give up the Suez, the main artery to their colonies in India and the Far East. This scenario never played out; however, the rail system did provide for the fast and efficient colonization of Kenya's deepest territories (Elkins, p. 2).

The expansive system of railroads had a particularly profound effect on the land and many of the Kikuyu living in the area. The Kikuyu would soon be displaced to make room for British farms and families. The Kikuyu, together with the Embu and Meru, constituted the largest single group of native peoples living in East Africa during the 1950s, with an estimated number of approximately half a million. The area in which this tribe lived consisted of a strip of land along the eastern side of the Aberdare (Aberdeen) Mountain forest and around the southern and western sides of the Mount Kenya forest. This area, in addition to the mountains themselves and the settled British areas of the agricultural land, would form the area in which the Kenyan Emergency would occur. The entire area was a space approximately one hundred miles from north to south and somewhat less from east to west (Kitson, p. 4).

The Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru were not just kicked off the land and told to seek refuge elsewhere, but were and compensated in various ways. One such practice of supposed compensation was for Kikuyu villages to be allowed to remain on the fringes of British farms where they would work and earn wages from British settlers. The land on which they traditionally farmed or grazed their livestock became British farms and the Kikuyu were used much as were sharecroppers or squatters in the south of the United States. In being permitted to stay they had to, in turn, work for the British for relatively

low wages. However, with more and more settlers moving into the East African pastoral lands, the Kikuyu often also found themselves being uprooted and moved time and time again.

The drive to amass colonies in Africa, both for Britain and other European nations, went deeper than a mere desire to expand their borders and enhance their international reach. A depression in the late 19th century gripped much of Europe and all the nations were looking for a way to increase profits abroad to pay for debts and losses at home. Great Britain, prior to the depression, didn't have to rely greatly on foreign colonies to out-compete her European neighbors. Britain did have prosperous colonies in India, Hong Kong, and Singapore but mainly relied on their ability to help them project power abroad as a strong maritime Naval force. They also served as a market for British goods, and as a source of raw material. However, during the depression of the late 19th century Great Britain found itself in the same predicament as every other European nation and Britain's grasp on the control of the continent was starting to slip. Along with the industrial revolutions taking place in Germany and the United States, this seemingly loss of control struck fear into the British government. It seemed that the only answer to its problems was the vast resources and economic potential Africa might provide and East Africa was at the forefront of Britain's ambitions (Elkins, p. 4).

Economic aspirations were not the only goals of the British colonial effort. Unlike other colonial powers, Britain felt it had an obligation to "civilize" the backwards, native people living in the colonies. The British felt it was their responsibility to transform the local people into productive citizens and bring them into the light of the modern world so they might have a role in their own governance, but more importantly so they might share in the responsibility and the maintenance of colonies such as Kenya. The British built churches and sent missionaries to East Africa in an attempt to civilize the native peoples and put an end to many of their "heathen" practices. These religious reforms, along with the practice of displacing Kikuyu from their native lands to make room for British settlers, would become the seeds of unrest in Kenya.

B. RISING TENSION IN KENYA AND THE EMERGENCE OF COLONIAL DISSENT

1. History of Unrest

Many problems would lead to the unrest in Kenya and the emergence of dissent among the native populations toward their British colonizers. These would include differences regarding religious beliefs and practices, economic and social practices (to include education) between the settlers and natives, but perhaps the single strongest influence would be the way in which the idea of land ownership and farming practices differed between the settlers and local populations.

The seeds of unrest began long before a state of emergency was declared in Kenya. Political unrest began soon after WWI when native peoples formed an association to protest low and inappropriate wages. Soon after, another group, formed largely by local leaders, sought to protect native rights in the area. The main difference between the two groups was that the one made up of local headmen was willing to work with the colonial British and the other was not. Since both parties strove to gain influence they were initially pitted against each other, a weakness the British quickly took advantage of by supporting the sympathetic group so that in a relatively short period of time, the other would cease to exist (Kitson, p. 5).

2. Religious Tensions

Among the many causes of tension in Kenya were the decidedly different ideas regarding the religious practices of the local populations and those of the new settlers. L.S.B. Leakey, in his 1954 book *Defeating Mau Mau*, describes the traditional Kikuyu religion as one that might closely resemble Christianity in the Old Testament. Before any European influence in East Africa, the Kikuyu believed in one God, commonly known as Nagi, Mwene Nyaga, or Murungu depending upon the particular sub-tribe. This one all-powerful God, according to Leakey, delighted in the sacrifice of animals and, as in many Christian religions, was an entity or a priest that one could pray directly to (Leakey, 1954, p. 43).

Leakey also argues that after the arrival of white settlers in East Africa the native Kikuyu began to forsake their own God and started to embrace the white man's God. The reasoning was that if the white man was as superior as he appeared, with all the

power and riches that were so apparent, then his God must be more powerful and greater than the native Gods (Leakey, p. 43). With the embrace of the white man's God came the desire of the white man to spread that religion. Shortly after the first settlers began to arrive, Christian missionaries followed in droves. Not only did these missionaries attempt to convince the native populations to accept Christianity as the one and only true religion, but when these same missionaries witnessed first hand the traditional religious and social practices of the Kikuyu, they attempted to abolish such practices. The loss of these traditional practices along with the influx of a foreign religion and unfair land practices would form a strong basis for the Mau Mau movement.

Education and religion would further cause problems within the local populations. For many years the only way a native Kikuyu could gain an education was to attend the schools provided by the white missionaries. According to Leakey, most Kikuyu who sought education didn't see this as necessarily a bad thing. However, the problem arose that if a Kikuyu were to attend a missionary school, he had to convert to Christianity. Many Kikuyu did so in order to obtain education, but only had a modest or even non-existent interest in becoming true Christians. In fact many Kikuyu attended the secular schools and were baptized into the Christian faith only to abandon the religion upon completion of their education (Leakey, p. 45).

These newly introduced religious beliefs and the banning of certain traditional practices caused conflict and even, at times, appeared to the Kikuyu to contradict themselves. For instance, in the Kikuyu culture it was customary for a man of stature to have multiple wives. To obtain multiple wives a man would have to pay a fee to the family of the woman he wished to marry, usually in the form of livestock. Christian Kikuyu who learned to read at missionary schools were able to read the Bible, which had been translated into Kikuyu. In the Bible many of the heroes of the Old Testament practiced polygamy, and nowhere could Kikuyu find evidence of the Bible denouncing such a practice. How then, could the Christian missionaries denounce this practice and forbid those who still practiced polygamy baptism and membership in the Christian faith? (Leakey, p. 46).

Another practice banned by the Christian missionaries was female circumcision. When a young Kikuyu reached puberty he or she went through an elaborate “coming of age” ceremony. In these ceremonies the young boys and girls were assigned a “circumcision sponsor” and were usually placed in groups, away from their parents, with their “circumcision brothers or sisters”. During this time various events would take place up to the actual time when the circumcision was supposed to occur. Close bonds were formed between the boys and girls in their respective groups and, in turn, these bonds helped the tribe cohere. For both males and females circumcision was not without risk as conditions were often not sanitary, but the risk for females was usually much higher. The Kikuyu argument was that by circumcising a female her ability to bear children with reduced risk of complications or death during childbirth was greatly increased. As in the case of polygamy, this practice was considered barbaric by the white settlers and missionaries and had to be rooted out of the native populations.

From the Kikuyu perspective Christian missionaries were overstepping the bounds of Christianity and the Bible. Many Kikuyu broke with the Christian church at this time, never to return. Others continued to believe in the teachings of Christianity and many set up independent separatist African Churches. These churches were first and foremost Christian churches, but received no help or recognition from the missionaries. This left something of a “religious vacuum” in the Kikuyu population. The political organization, the Kikuyu Central Authority or K.C.A. regarded this as an opportunity. If it could devise a religion that could fulfill the spiritual needs of the population, but allow people traditional practices, the K.C.A. would be able to harness a large percentage of the population. The K.C.A. believed that if it could develop and convince people to follow this religion, it could compel them to fight and die for it. So, what Leakey regards as the Mau Mau *religion* was born (Leakey, p. 47).

3. Social and Economic Origins of Dissent

The social and economic origins of the Kenyan Emergency were varied and far flung. From the arrival of the first white settlers in East Africa until the end of the crisis in 1960, the economy would see several changes. During this time two world wars would be fought, crop and livestock practices would change drastically, and the use of native labor would also undergo dramatic changes.

During the 1930s, the depression in Europe reached Kenya as well. This created a crisis for the colonial state, whose solution was to increase native labor production to finance the colony's bureaucracy and ensure survival of the farming community through subsidies until prices would rise in the late 1930s (Throup, 1988, p. 4). This led to stratification among Kikuyu landowners and tenants or squatters which would later become fuel for the Mau Mau movement.

In the 1940s Kenya experienced great prosperity, due to a rise in agricultural prices relating to the war effort in Europe. During this time many of the male settlers were absent from their settlements, serving in the armed forces. This left the African squatters and peasant farmers relatively free to do as they wished as far as crop production was concerned. Not only were native populations able to increase their wealth by selling to the British government, but many also sold their goods on the black market, which went relatively unchecked during the war years.

With the end of the war, the situation changed drastically. Squatter cultivation was restricted to 2.5 acres per wife, and the numbers of livestock the natives were allowed to keep were greatly reduced. Male Africans over the age of 16 were forced to work at least 270 days per year. According to David Throup, by 1946 practices like these, which the native populations were not used to, were being greatly opposed, particularly in the Naivasha, Aberdares, and Nakuru district council areas (the area at the heart of the Mau Mau movement). The following year the discontent spread to Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia, and to Abaluhya and Elgeyo squatters as well as the Kikuyu. Mau Mau would become a strong force among these displaced and dispossessed populations (Throup, p. 8).

Another major factor influencing native thought at this time was the enormous influx of Kikuyu and other rural peoples to the metropolitan centers, primarily Nairobi and Mombasa. Between 1941 and 1948 the population in Nairobi was growing by 17 percent a year. The provisional housing authority attempted to keep pace with the influx, but with low African earnings (usually below the poverty level) housing had to be provided at sub-economic rents, placing a substantial burden on settler ratepayers. After WWII rent prices continued to rise, unemployment grew with more and more people

flooding into the cities, and crime became rampant in Nairobi and Mombasa (Throup, p. 9). Attempts were made to halt the influx of people and curb the rise in crime but with little effect. New legislation sought tighter control over population flows and creation of more police, but those who were expelled from the cities mostly drifted back by 1950 and crime continued to rise. By 1950 the Kikuyu street gangs were firmly in control of the streets of Nairobi. This, too, helped to fuel the Mau Mau movement by providing a large pool of displaced young men from which to draw recruits (Throup, p. 10).

The Mau Mau movement in its infancy was under the control of Nairobi militants and populated by the street thugs who had emigrated there in previous years. According to Throup, these desperate groups in the cities, reserves, and on the European farms in the Rift Valley accepted violence as their last resort. The Mau Mau were already committing violence on a large scale by early 1952. Cattle on white settlements were being destroyed and standing crops and haystacks set on fire, particularly in Nanyuki, which lay immediately north of the Nyeri Reserve (Throup, p. 11).

4. Inequalities in Land Owner and Stewardship

Perhaps one of the most important issues raised and fought for by the Mau Mau insurgents was land reform. Ever since the establishment of the East African Protectorate, there existed a need for manual labor to cultivate and harvest the white settlers farms. The primary source was native labor in the form of squatters. Squatters were allowed to live on (or near) and reap some benefit from the land in exchange for their manual labor. During the settlement of Kenya, the British alienated approximately 7 million acres of the most fertile land in the center of the country, which then became known as the White Highlands (see Figure 2) and was set aside exclusively for European agricultural purposes (Kanogo, 1987, p. 8).

Due to the lack of voluntary labor, white settlers imposed a series of taxes and laws to more or less force the native population into service. The alienation of African lands and the restrictions imposed on natives as to what they were allowed to grow on lands neighboring settlements ensured they would not be able to maintain a livelihood *unless* they resorted to working for the settlements (Kanogo, p. 9). During the early years of settlement, Europeans were to pay the Kikuyu for rights to their land. This settlement amounted to approximately 3 rupees per acre. According to Carl Roseburg and John

Nottingham, in the Kiambu-Limuru areas about 60, 000 acres were alienated between 1903 and 1906, and by 1933, 109.5 square miles of prime, fertile Kikuyu land had been taken for European settlement (as cited in Kanogo, p. 9).

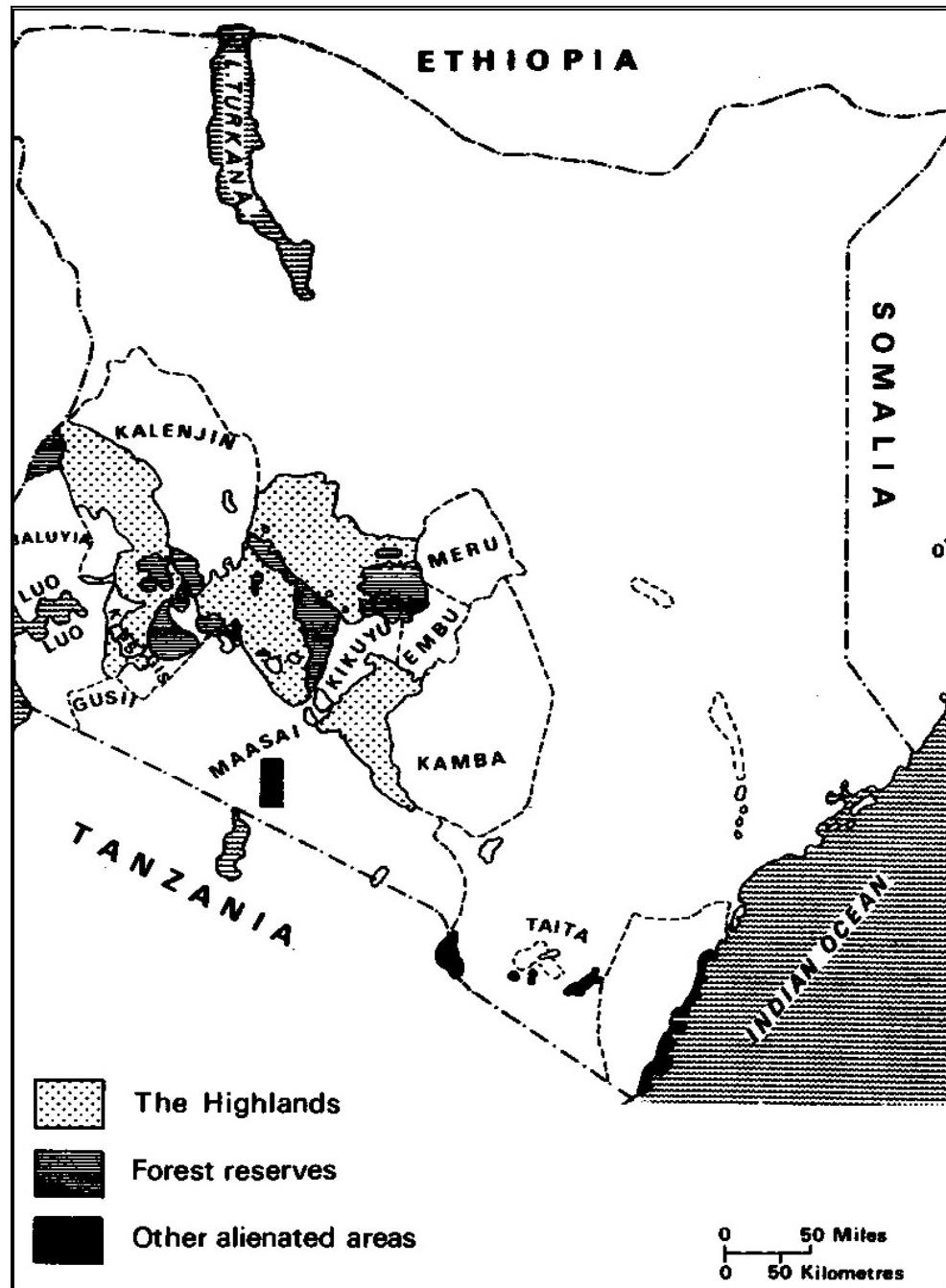


Figure 2. Location of the White Highlands. . From *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, by Frank Furedi, 1989. Copyright James Curry Ltd, 1989. Reprinted with permission.

Originally there were 50 Europeans who were to pay the Kikuyu for the land they eventually occupied. The total sum of money paid to compensate the Kikuyu was approximately 3,848 rupees to be shared equally between 8,000 Kikuyu. Three thousand Kikuyu living on the land received no compensation whatsoever. By July of 1910 there were approximately 12,000 Kikuyu living in the Kiambu-Limuru area and working nearly 11,300 acres of white settlement land. Many of these “squatters” were the original owners of the land who were now working as more or less indentured servants (Kanogo, p. 10). This was the beginning of what the Kikuyu would consider to be unfair land practices by the British settlers, again setting the stage for the Mau Mau emergency.

As a result of perceived unfair land practices many Kikuyu, who were traditionally tied to a certain area, found themselves on the move looking for land to work elsewhere. According to Frank Furedi, in his book *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, the Naivasha District Commissioner conducted a census of origin of the squatters in his area of responsibility. In 1919, 39 farms in the Naivasha District there were 1,406 squatters and their respective families. Table 1 outlines the breakdown of these squatters. Most likely similar statistics could have been gathered throughout the White Highlands in 1919 (Furedi, 1989, p. 41).

Table 1. Origin by district of squatters in Naivasha District, 1919

		<i>Percentage</i>
Kiambu	343	24.3
Fort Hall	451	32
Dagoretti	538	38.2
Nyeri	74	5.25

Source: *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, by F. Furedi, 1989. Copyright 1989 by James Currey, London. Reproduced with permission.

This massive movement of native Kikuyu moving off the reserves onto settler farms for work played to the advantage of the British settlers. Beginning in 1925 the European settlers could demand longer work days, changes in tenancy practices, reductions in the

amount of livestock a tenant could own, and restrictions on certain crops tenants could produce. By 1927, when the Resident Native Laborers Ordinance began to be enforced 1,050 squatters were convicted for breaking the laws laid out by the ordinance (Furedi, p. 44).

This change in the manner in which squatters were being treated forced a shift in the movement of squatters and many began moving back to the reserves from which they came. In fact, many more individuals moved back to the reserves than had originally left, again forcing unwanted change and unrest among the Kikuyu living in the reserves, as well as among those returning. Table 2 shows both the number of Kikuyu living on and off the reserves and what a 100% return of displaced Kikuyu would mean for those living within the reserves. The attendant problems and inequities contributed significantly to the motivation for rebellion and aided in the creation of the Mau Mau movement.

Table 2. The relation of labor migration to the Kikuyu Reserves, 1931

<i>Kikuyu Districts</i>	<i>Area (acres)</i>	<i>Resident Kikuyu population</i>	<i>Acreage per head of Kikuyu population</i>	<i>Kikuyu outside the district</i>	<i>Acreage per head if non-resident Kikuyu return</i>
Kiambu	254,720	104,021	2.45	37,256	1.70
Fort Hall	373,120	171,852	2.17	40,073	1.76
Nyeri	194,560	121,210	1.60	18,303 (?)	1.34
Total	822,640	297,091	2.07	95,637	1.67

Source: *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, by F. Furedi, 1989. Copyright 1989 by James Currey, London. Reproduced with permission.

Olenguruone (see Figure 3), a prototype African settlement for squatters, was located above the White Highlands to help stem the widespread movement of Kikuyu and prevent some of the problems alluded to above. The occupants of Olenguruone were both displaced Kikuyu from the highlands and displaced individuals who had been driven out of Massailand in 1940-1941. Most of the occupants, who had been or were

squatters, were belligerent, having been forced out of Il Melili and Nairage Nagare in Massailand. When the British Government attempted tried to enforce the Resident Native laborers Ordinance on the population living in Olenguruone, the residents resisted to the point where it became necessary to expel them in 1950. This crisis became an ongoing problem for Kenya and many of the individuals expelled from Olenguruone would become Mau Mau insurgents (Throup, p. 8). This particular settlement would become the hotbed for political dissent over the next few years, particularly among Kikuyu in the Rift Valley with close ties to individuals and groups in Soysambu, Naivasha, and Limuru (see Figure 2). According to Throup, “This chain of radical contacts provided the organizational framework for the development in the White Highlands, where one in four of the total Kikuyu population lived, of what came to be known as Mau Mau.” (Throup, p. 8).

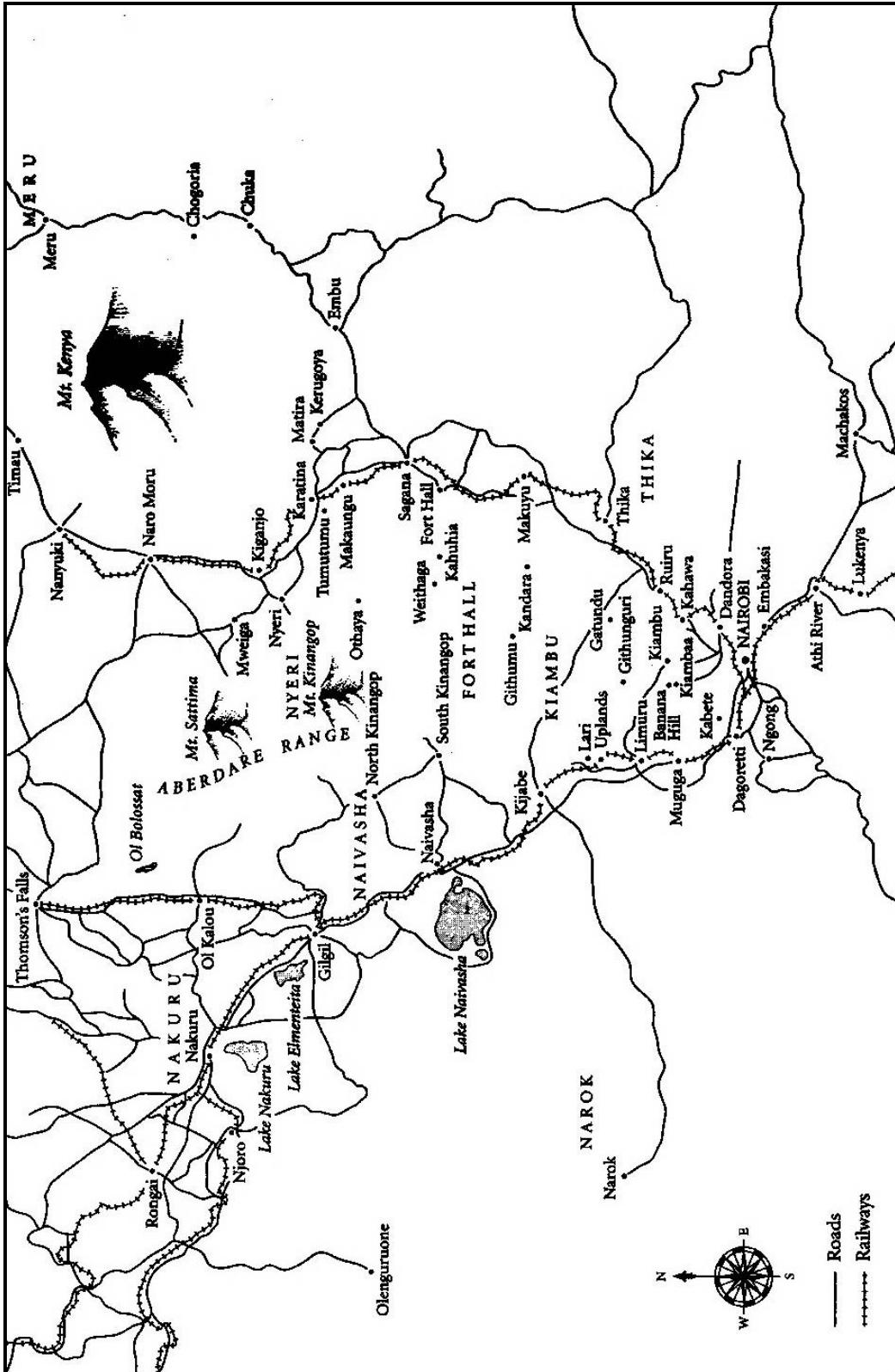


Figure 3. Kikuyuland, c. 1952. From *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, by David Anderson, 2005. Copyright W.W. Norton and Co. 2005. Reprinted with permission.

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II. THE MAU MAU INSURGENCY

A. THE MAU MAU ORGANIZATION

1. Birth of Mau Mau K.C.A. and K.A.U.

As has already been mentioned, several native African-rights groups, mostly Kikuyu, appeared during the first half of the 20th century in colonial Kenya. According to Frank Kitson, the first group to appear in support of native rights did so immediately following WWI. This first group had no aims beyond pressuring the colonial government about unfair wages for native peoples. Kitson argues that the real importance surrounding this group was its underlying attitude of opposition to colonial rule (Kitson, p. 5). There were two groups mentioned previously that were pitted against one another by the colonial government. Because each was vying for power, they eventually led to each other's downfall. As this was happening, the first Nairobi-based group of native Africans (mostly Kikuyu) was collapsing; however, this group would be reformed into the more powerful and influential Kikuyu Central Association (K.C.A.) in 1924. The K.C.A. gained popularity by combining its anti-colonial message with the ideals of ancient Kikuyu culture (Kitson, p. 6). During the 1930s, skirmishes between militant and moderate Kikuyu in Nairobi had grown quite bitter. By the time the K.C.A. was forced underground in 1940 by the colonial government, as a part of a strategy of wartime controls on African political activities, the organization could claim a membership of more than 7,000 individuals with a much larger support base (Anderson, 2005, p. 39). Out of the ashes of the K.C.A. would come yet a stronger nationalist organization, called the Kenyan African Union or K.A.U in 1945. This group was largely made up of old members of the K.C.A. and shared many of their beliefs, goals, and motivations.

An aspect of Kikuyu culture that will be addressed in detail later is that of oathing. Many aspects of Kikuyu life were based on verbal and religious oaths taken by individuals as a form of verbal covenant. Oaths were grounded in native religion and were taken very seriously by the individuals who uttered them. The K.C.A. would use the system of oathing to secure members' loyalty (Kitson, p. 8).

Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, Nairobi would become a hot bed of urban political militancy with many old K.C.A. members opposed to colonial rule of any kind. Among these militants were the infamous *Anake a fortí*, or the “Forty Group,” made up of ex-Kenyan service members who returned to Nairobi after the war to find themselves unemployed and their living conditions unacceptable (Anderson, p. 36). For these individuals and many others, the formal politics the K.A.U. were pursuing held little appeal and they found black market dealings and violence the only solutions to worsening problems. These radical groups in and around Nairobi became known as *Muhimu*. The *Muhimu* originally began operating in the urban areas of Nairobi, but eventually expanded their reach to other areas including the Rift Valley where white settlers were still pursuing the colonial lifestyle. This movement would also feed into Mau Mau.

According to David Anderson, some time between the end of 1948 and February of 1950, members of the African Kiambaa Parliament, a group of no more than a dozen Kikuyu political activists, decided it was time to deal with the *Muhimu* problem. The parliament administered the K.A.U. oath to two members of the Taxi Drivers union in Nairobi. These individuals, in turn, would themselves then be able to administer oaths that they could be make more militant, both to deal with the militant Nairobi *Muhimu* and to place increased pressure on the colonial government and settlers. Jomo Kenyatta, then leader of the K.A.U., along with other leaders in the organization and Kenyan parliament were unsure about the wisdom of incorporating militants into K.A.U. ranks. The move could garner the K.A. U. more support and help further the cause, but would the leadership be able to control the militants when temperance was required (Anderson, p. 38)? According to Anderson, this use of militants proved to be a fatal mistake on the part of the K.A.U. The militants wasted no time in seizing power and used Jomo Kenyatta as the point man for their cause. The moderates in the K.A.U. including Kenyatta, not only lost control of their organization, but would never again regain it. In February of 1951, the militants would seize more power by removing the remaining moderates during a “rigged” election. The militants packed the Kaloleni Hall in Nairobi and swept the elections. Anderson argues that Kenyatta was horrified by the outcome of the elections and the loss of power by the moderates in the K.A.U. According to Anderson, Kenyatta

viewed the militants as undisciplined and believed they would lead to the ruin of the Kikuyu people and their way of life (Anderson, p. 39). During this time, after seizing power, the K.A.U. focused on obtaining arms and supporters for what it saw as the eventual clash with the settlers. This clash would manifest itself in what would become the Kenyan Emergency in 1952.

2. Mau Mau Exploitation of the Kikuyu Religious Beliefs

a. Traditional Kikuyu Religion

Traditional religion and Christianity play an integral role in the development and adherence to the Mau Mau movement; even Mau Mau in itself had a religion of its own formed out of aspects of both religions that would best suit its cause.

Kikuyu religion placed great belief in omens, charms, and spells. Many influential Mau Mau leaders including Mathenge, Dedan Kimathi, and General China would place their greatest faith in a resident medicine man/prophet named *Mundo Mugo* who was able to receive visions from God during his dreams. These Mau Mau leaders would rely heavily on the Prophet's visions to make decisions regarding the Mau Mau movement (Edgerton, 1989, p. 122). Additionally, the traditional Kikuyu practice of oathing or the taking of verbal oaths of loyalty to a cause or religion was another aspect of traditional Kikuyu culture that the Mau Mau would exploit and use to their advantage.

b. Christianity in Kenya

As mentioned previously an interesting aspect of Kikuyu culture and religion is that it closely resembles Christianity in the theory of a single supreme being but incorporates certain aspects of shamanism and superstition. According to Louis Leakey, the traditional Kikuyu religion had much in common with the Old Testament. The traditional God of the Kikuyu people was known as Kgai, Mwene Nyaga, and Muruang, depending upon what tribe the individual belonged. This Supreme Being was the one and only true God who delighted in animal sacrifice and to whom the individual could pray directly (Leakey, p. 43). Two aspects of traditional Kikuyu religion that would become a source of contention between the Kikuyu and the colonial missionaries were those of plural marriage and female circumcision. In that regard, the traditional Kikuyu religion did have distinct differences to Christianity as well.

Christianity played a pivotal role in the Mau Mau Emergency. Mau Mau leaders would seek to portray the white settlers as invaders who had destroyed the Kikuyu way of life, land, and religion. As mentioned earlier, traditional Kikuyu religion was really quite similar to that of Old Testament Christianity. However, when the British arrived, the Kikuyu started to question their belief in their own religious figures. According to Louis Leakey, many Kikuyu considered the white settlers, with all of their material wealth and power, to be superior. This superiority then translated into the idea that if the whites are a superior race, they must believe in a superior God (Leakey, p. 43). Leakey argues that in the early days of colonization, turning a few Kikuyu toward Christianity proved to be a relatively simple task. This task increased in difficulty as time went on and more and more Kikuyu were converted. Additionally, there were always Kikuyu who never really believed in a Christian God. Of the Kikuyu most loyal to the British and opposed to the Mau Mau, most were true Christian converts (Leakey, p. 43). The influence of Christian missionaries was also felt in the political and social arenas. Literacy, introduced by the missionaries, offered an alternative political focus for young Kikuyu. For instance, Jomo Kenyatta was baptized in August 1914 at the Church of Scotland Mission, Kikuyu (Rosberg and Nottingham, 1970, p. 18). Many Kikuyu who were baptized simply did so to garner education in the schools set up by white missionaries; many of their beliefs in the religion went no further than this. According to Leakey, missionaries initially considered this as a good thing. Since the only way for natives to secure a liberal education was to attend the mission schools, they would automatically be receiving a religious education at the same time. Of course the missionaries did not question the possibility that the individual might just want the free education and might have no interest in Christianity at all (Leakey, p. 45). The problems of melding Christianity and Kikuyu religion were further exasperated by the outlawing of plural marriage and female circumcision. All of this, again, helped the K.C.A. set up a religion that offered the alienated Kikuyu meaning and a return to traditional Kikuyu values (Leakey, p. 47).

c. Mau Mau as an Amalgamation of Beliefs, Religion, Practices, and Goals

Viewed as a return to traditional Kikuyu religion, beliefs, and practices, the militant founders of Mau Mau realized this situation and used it as a means to recruit

new initiates and bind them as loyal subjects of the movement. Because Mau Mau promoted a “return to traditional values” it made tremendous sense to use the Kikuyu practice of oathing to enforce their message. Christian attitudes toward traditional Kikuyu values concerning certain customs, especially plural marriage and female circumcision, made certain Kikuyu populations especially ripe for a new “Mau Mau” *religion*. During the early 1950s the term Mau Mau religion was being used increasingly often by leaders of the movement. According to Louis Leakey, during the trial of Jomo Kenyatta, the Mau Mau movement was referred to as ‘the religion of Mau Mau’ in a K.C.A.-friendly newspaper (Leakey, p. 41).

Many of the individuals the Mau Mau leaders attempted to win over had been Christian converts for a considerable time, while some of the younger individuals had been raised as Christians from birth. This made the Mau Mau’s task of winning people over based on traditional religious beliefs somewhat difficult. Therefore, the new religion incorporated certain aspects of Christianity in order to appeal to the masses the Mau Mau were seeking to attract. A Mau Mau creed was devised that made allusions to both Christianity and traditional Kikuyu religious beliefs. The new creed was to be repeated daily by new Mau Mau converts, who thus demonstrated that they would accept Mau Mau as their chosen religion and Jomo Kenyatta as a proxy for Jesus Christ (Leakey, p. 47). Many of the leaders of the separatist churches mentioned earlier were won over by the new religion, especially when Mau Mau leaders spoke out openly against the white missionaries and their Christian religion. The church leaders were able to satisfy the masses by encouraging them to follow traditional Kikuyu customs outlawed by the Christian missions. The leaders of Mau Mau, of course, encouraged this and exploited it to full advantage. The new churches proclaimed that God would protect and bless those who embraced the new religion, while those who opposed it, namely white Christians, should be fought and destroyed at every opportunity (Leakey, p. 48).

Along with the new religion came new ways to bind followers to it. The Mau Mau used verbal and physical oaths, in particular, to bind new converts to the Mau Mau religion. Once an individual was bound to this new religion through the use of oaths it became much easier for the leaders of Mau Mau to convince him to commit acts of violence and death in the name of the religion of and God. Leakey argues that when the

magical aspects of the traditional Kikuyu oath were combined with the violent fervor of the Mau Mau movement is it not difficult to understand how some many peace-loving Kikuyu were transformed into “fanatical, murdering, maniacs” under the tutelage of the Mau Mau (Leakey, p. 52).

3. Oaths and Oath Taking

Kikuyu traditionally used verbal oaths, often coupled with physical acts of various kinds, to signal a change in status or responsibilities or to socially show one’s loyalty to the tribe or family group. Traditionally, oaths taken by Kikuyu men were relatively benign in nature and did not involve any form of violence; they were simply a method by which tribal loyalty was reaffirmed. By the time the Kenyan Emergency was declared in 1952, the leaders of the Mau Mau movement had incorporated increasingly violent oaths to ensure the loyalty of their followers. This proved to be particularly potent for Mau Mau; additionally, oaths were used to legitimize violent and heinous acts in the eyes of those committing them.

Rosberg and Nottingham argue that oath taking in many societies is both a sacred and social event. Most oaths serve similar purposes, but may take on very different outward appearances. In most societies oaths incorporate symbols related to the supreme values of that society. In taking the oath, the individual binds himself or herself to the organization and to the larger obligations of the group. Additionally, taking the oath implies that one understands the rules and regulations by which the organization is maintained. The oath helps to distinguish between those friendly to the group and those who may wish to do it harm (Rosberg and Nottingham, p. 244).

During the Kenyan Emergency there were differing grades of oaths administered by the Mau Mau to influence and reap desired results from their followers; those of a lower grade were less violent and those of higher grades involved increasing acts of violence and depravity (Leakey, p. 77). According to Wunyabari Maloba in his book *Mau Mau and Kenya*, the oaths can be broken down into three categories: first stage or unity oaths; second stage oaths involving some first stage symbolism but introducing the Batuni or warrior oath; and the controversial third stage or advanced oaths (Maloba, p. 102). The unity oath was intended to unite as many Kikuyu as possible behind the Mau Mau cause. The unity oath contributed to what could be regarded as a nationalist

recruitment drive, and individuals who participated were expected to involve as many friends as possible in the oath as well (Barnett and Njama, p. 123). The unity oath was not physically demanding and usually was performed primarily verbally with minimal attention to the physical aspects of the oath.

Examples of some of the unity or first-degree verbal oaths are as follows:

- I will not give away the secrets of this Society.
- I will not help Government apprehend members of this Society.
- I will not sell our land to strangers.
- I will help the society, when called upon to do so, with funds.
I will, if called upon to do so, render any help to members of the society that I am asked to do (Leakey, p. 81).

The Batuni or warrior oaths demanded much more of the participants and were much viler in content. The Batuni oath was given primarily to the forest fighters of the Mau Mau and the initiates would swear to kill on behalf of the Mau Mau. These “second-degree” oaths were much more physically demanding. The initiates were required to be naked and sexual symbolism was introduced. According to Barnett and Njama, the initiate would insert his penis through a hole in a dead goat’s thorax with his left hand and at the same time insert seven small wooden sticks, one at a time, into the thorax while repeating the vows of the oath (as cited in Maloba, p. 103). The primary purpose behind this oath was to ensure a greater sense of loyalty among those members of Mau Mau who participated (Maloba, p. 103).

Examples of some second degree or warrior/Batuni oaths are:

- If I am called upon to do so, with four others, I will kill a European.
- If I am called upon to do so, I will kill a Kikuyu who is against the Mau Mau, even if it be my mother or my father or brother or sister or wife or child.
- If called upon to do so, I will help dispose of the body of a murdered person so that it may not be found.
- I will never disobey the orders of the leaders of this society (Leakey, p. 82).

Other examples of second-degree oaths as outlined in Thompson's *Counterinsurgency Manual* are:

- If I ever reveal the secrets of this organization, may this oath kill me.
- If I ever sell or dispose of any Kikuyu land to a foreigner, may this oath kill me.
- If I ever fail to follow our great leader Kenyatta, may this oath kill me.
- If I ever inform against any member of this organization or against any member who steals from a European, may this oath kill me.
- If I ever fail to pay the fees of this organization, may this oath kill me.
- If I am sent to bring in the head of an enemy and I fail to do so, may this oath kill me.
- If I fail to steal anything I can from a European, may this oath kill me.
- If I know of any enemy to our organization and I fail to report him to my leader, may this oath kill me.
- If I am ever sent by a leader to do something for the house of Kikuyu and I refuse, may this oath kill me.
- If I refuse to help in the driving of Europeans from this country, may this oath kill me.
- If I worship any leader other than Jomo Kenyatta, may this oath kill me (Thompson, 2002, p. 55).

The third, more controversial, advanced oaths remain to this day shrouded in secrecy and mystery. It is thought that the advanced oaths were so vile that they were given only to convicted criminals who had no chance of ever redeeming themselves. These oaths were rumored to include acts of eating meat rubbed against human genitalia or drinking of human blood. Again, it is believed that these oaths were only given to those individuals who were brought into the organization and sworn to kill on behalf of Mau Mau. Most of the information available regarding the advanced oaths came from the interrogation of captured Mau Mau fighters (Maloba, p. 105). Whether the advanced oaths were widespread or not is of little consequence. The colonial government seized upon the vileness of the advanced oaths in order to whip up local support against the Mau

Mau. According to Maloba, the goal was to exploit the worst aspects of Mau Mau so as to deny it support and sympathy from potential allies (Maloba, p. 104).

4. Mau Mau Goals

The goals and aims of Mau Mau were as varied as the causes. Most likely, the overriding goal was that of any insurgency: political change and power. During the 1940s and 1950s, most Western European countries that still held colonies were experiencing protests in those territories. France in Southeast Asia and Africa, Britain in India and China, Spain and Portugal in Africa and the Americas, and Germany and Belgium in other regions of Africa found themselves at odds with the nationalistic fervor that was beginning to consume the third-world during this time. As mentioned earlier, the post-WWII era saw a retreat of colonial powers who had large war debts to pay and rebuilding costs at home. At the same time, many third world countries were moving in the same direction as China during its communist revolution after the war, a bandwagon China and the Soviet Union were more than willing to jump on in their effort to recruit an increasing number of communist nations.

The Mau Mau had stated goals other than what was likely their most important desired outcome, freedom from colonial oppression. In Louis Leakey's 1952 book, *Defeating Mau Mau*, he argues that it is difficult to ascertain the Mau Mau goals simply from reading their propaganda or listening to the speeches of Mau Mau leaders. He summarizes the stated goals of Mau Mau as the following:

1. Recover the land stolen from us by the white man.
2. Obtain self-government.
3. Destroy Christianity.
4. Restore ancient customs whenever possible.
5. Drive out, or subjugate, all foreigners.
6. Abolish soil conservation.
7. Increase secular education (Leakey, p. 21).

Many Kikuyu involved in the Mau Mau revolt felt the primary goal of the insurgency was to recover land stolen by the white settlers. As mentioned earlier, the European settlement of what would become known as the White Highlands began in the southern district of Kikuyu country (as cited in Kanogo, p. 9). European applications to

settle this land usually met with immediate approval from the governing colonial authority with the stipulation that settlers pay the native Kikuyu three rupees per acre. The goal of returning this land to the Kikuyu was a top priority for the Mau Mau movement.

As with any insurgency, political power is usually high on the list of stated goals. With the Mau Mau insurgency this was always a goal though the message was often lost in the propaganda. Self-governance was never a goal of the older K.C.A. or K.A.U., but with emerging events worldwide the idea of nationalism and self-governance began to take hold (Leakey, p. 24).

The Mau Mau goal of destroying Christianity was again, an aim that was probably not completely and wholeheartedly followed. The more likely goal was restoring traditional Kikuyu customs. Because many Kikuyu were baptized Christians and had only broke away from the Christian church because of a difference of opinion concerning the traditional Kikuyu customs of plural marriage and female circumcision the goal was more directly aimed at destroying the missionary influence. As time progressed, the leaders of Mau Mau saw Christianity as an increasing barrier to their goals and the Mau Mau religion was used to replace the teachings of Christianity in order to better control supporters (Leakey, p. 26).

Driving out all foreigners was a stated goal that dovetailed with goal of recovering stolen land. Additionally, it was a commonly held belief that the foreigners were only using the Kikuyu for as long as they needed them, and what would befall the Kikuyu would be the same as experienced by other indigenous persons in other parts of the world such as the Indians in North America or the Aborigines in Australia (Leakey, p. 30).

The abolishment of soil conservation seems a very abstract goal for any insurgency, but because of the Kikuyus' close ties to the land, this goal had a profound effect on the members. Its intent was to help garner support from Kikuyu women. In traditional Kikuyu culture the women did all of the cultivating of the land while the men primarily tended livestock. Kikuyu women viewed the soil conservation programs implemented by the British as a means to keep them from pursuing their life's task of

cultivation. That is, if all of one's time was spent working on terracing, contouring, and planting grasses and forbs to halt soil erosion, then no time would be left for cultivation. It was of little interest to the women that the soil conservation programs actually increased crop yield and decreased manual labor in the end (Leakey, p. 30).

The final aim of the Mau Mau movement was to increase secular education among young Kikuyu. Louis Leakey argues this aim was somewhat paradoxical due to the fact the Mau Mau spent a considerable amount of time burning down schools and killing teachers; however, those schools and teachers were Christian schools and missionary teachers. The main aim behind this stated goal was to attract more young people to the cause. The Kikuyu youth of Kenya had been pushing for more education for a considerable amount of time, which is one reason the leaders of Mau Mau proclaimed that more schools and opportunities for education would be provided by the Mau Mau once the Europeans had been defeated (Leakey, p. 31).

Ironically, Mau Mau's stated goals may have been critical to its ultimate defeat. Many of the goals outlined above either conflicted with one another or conflicted with the beliefs and goals of the individuals they intended to influence. These problems, coupled with the fact there was no clearly stated goal and strategy for obtaining political power in the country once the European settlers gave up and went home, are perhaps what doomed the Mau Mau movement from the very beginning. Shortly we will focus on how the British came to understand the apparent lack of focus in the Mau Mau goals, and the methods they used to exploit these gaps and internal contradictions.

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III. THE BRITISH RESPONSE TO INSURGENCY

A. REFORMING MAU MAU AND UNDERMINING THE MOVEMENT

British efforts to reform educational, religious, social, economic, and cultural conditions in an effort to combat Mau Mau began almost as soon as the emergency itself. Many of the reforms in Kenya were focused toward prisoners and former fighters of the insurgency. Such reforms were based on the premise that a former Mau Mau fighter would have to be “decontaminated” and his terrorist-based teachings purged in order for him to reenter society. It was British belief that the Mau Mau would have to be re-educated about the benefits of colonial rule and taught that the colonizers were friends of the Kikuyu and only had their best interests in mind (Maloba, p. 137).

In most cases, political, religious, and educational reforms were focused toward de-legitimizing the Mau Mau revolt. In some cases, however, widespread detention, communal punishment, confessions, and mass identification programs were implemented, all of which removed significant support from the revolt (Maloba, p. 137). The Kikuyu who fell into the latter category of being supporters were sent through the “pipeline”. That is to say, they were detainees who were passed through screening and reeducation camps and would eventually end up in open camps in their original village (Maloba, p. 138).

1. British Educational Reforms

The issue of education, mostly obtained from Christian missionaries, has already been addressed. In traditional Kikuyu culture education was provided at the village/community level. This education was more of a cultural education than one undertaken for personal advancement later in life, as is the goal of Western education. Traditionally, if a young individual did not live up to the community expectations or adhere to the responsibilities of becoming an adult, he or she was forbidden from taking the “adulthood oaths” and participating in the initiation ceremonies needed to pass from adolescence to adulthood. This traditional form of education helped to strengthen bonds between the youth and elders in the tribe and established the hierarchy necessary for survival and growth in the tribal environment.

After missionaries established schools and churches in East Africa, education began to change and, with it, the dynamic of Kikuyu tribal culture. The Christian secular schools set up by missionaries taught African children to read and write. The more these young Africans learned about the outside world, the harder it became for the elders in their respective tribes to control them. At the same time that the thirst for education was increasing among Kikuyu youth, the missionary teachers were finding it harder and harder to teach due to the small number of teachers available. Subsequently many of the teaching responsibilities were given to African teachers whose main focus was to teach primarily reading and writing. The overall result was a broad base of young Kikuyu with limited educational background and little knowledge of how to be proper, respectful, and mature young adults. Because of this erosion of the moral and cultural fabric of Kikuyu culture and the growing nationalistic sentiment sweeping through Africa in general, it is not hard to see why so many young Kikuyu were taken in by Mau Mau rhetoric. It quickly became apparent to the British that something had to be done in the area of education reforms (Leakey, p. 132).

It was also widely believed by the colonial government that the schools were either becoming or had already become safe houses and recruiting institutions for the Mau Mau. It was believed that the leaders of Mau Mau were using sympathetic African teachers to administer oaths and preach revolution in the schoolhouses. The colonial government thus closed thirty-four independent schools run by the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA) and Kikuyu Karinga Education Association (KKEA) in areas known to be sympathetic to Mau Mau in 1953, a move that would prove a costly mistake. The closing of these schools left numerous teachers displaced and unemployed, and approximately 7000 students without education. The closing of the schools would fuel violent protest from the individuals who had worked so hard to establish them, and only added to the emergency. David Anderson, in his book *Histories of the Hanged*, argues these school closures would mark the real beginning of the Mau Mau war (Anderson, p. 72).

Many, including Louis Leakey in 1954, argued that a complete overhaul of the education system in Kenya was necessary though few knew exactly what was needed. Leakey argued that careful reexamination of the teachers charged with the education of

the Kikuyu youth should be conducted. Additionally, the curricula being taught to young people needed to be reorganized with a strong emphasis placed on the teaching of citizenship and the elements required to become prosperous and community-minded adults (Leakey, p. 134).

Most of the re-education of Mau Mau insurgents relied heavily on convincing the individuals in question that the government had the Kikuyus' best interest in mind and that the Mau Mau were only detrimental to Kikuyu society. The reform movement wanted to convince Kikuyu that a much brighter future lay in supporting the government rather than supporting Mau Mau. The re-education programs implemented in the detention camps for Mau Mau detainees focused on changing an individual's revolutionary ideology. The philosophy of P.W. Foss, a government consultant in the Kajiado camp, was that if an individual's belief structure is to be crushed it must be replaced with a stronger, more powerful ideology (Maloba, p. 138). This sentiment is reflected as well in Robert Ruark's book *Something of Value*. The old beliefs must be replaced with something of value. Foss believed that existing ties, cohesion, and morale would have to be broken down in the camps and among the Mau Mau supporters. According to Maloba, Foss used the following announcements in the camps to break detainee morale:

- You have been fooled
- You are lost and forgotten
- Your families, your women and your people despise you (Maloba, p. 139).

Detainees were constantly deprived of any privacy and music was used as a psychological weapon in the camps. The overall goal of this re-education program was to produce loyal subjects of the Crown (Maloba, p. 139).

2. Christian, Kikuyu, and Mau Mau Religious/Social Reforms

The British understood religious reforms were also necessary. Because Mau Mau itself was being viewed as a religion, the task of reforming Mau Mau followers required that religion be tackled. Additionally, since the educational system provided for the Kikuyu was developed and implemented by Christian missionaries who were also

responsible for “civilizing and saving” the natives, it would be virtually impossible to reform education without addressing the religion.

Louis Leakey argued in 1954 that for religious reforms to succeed in de-legitimizing the Mau Mau movement, little would have to be changed about the Kikuyu religion. It appears he was correct. His argument was that since traditional Kikuyu religion is very similar to European Christianity, minus a few cultural practices, the Kikuyu naturally would want to follow the religion and those who strayed could be brought back. The issue of plural wives and female circumcision, Leakey argues, were certainly outside the teaching of the Church of England, but in the Bible these practices are either not mentioned or, when they are, are not condemned. Additionally, the Church of England would not allow the brother of a deceased family member to have sexual relations with the deceased’s wife, a practice the Church regarded as polygamy but a normal practice in traditional Kikuyu culture. Leakey argued that the Churches must make up their minds whether or not to allow such practices, which did not fall outside the teachings of the Old Testament.

Before Mau Mau became a religion, the K.C.A. was only able to draw about 10,000 followers; however, when it became religious in nature it drew hundreds of thousands. Leakey argued that the Kikuyu be allowed to set up their own Independent Churches under the guidance and full support of the Church of England (Leakey, p. 131). Eventually independent churches were set up and missionary churches began to offer some influence. Many of the traditional Kikuyu practices, however, that had been either banned or highly discouraged by Christian missionaries never did return. The fact that the practices had been outlawed for so long, along with new outside influences on younger generations, led many Kikuyu to abandon the practices forever.

Kikuyu evangelists were also attached permanently to the detention camps for Mau Mau detainees. A detainee who wanted to reform would be required to confess his sins against the government and Kikuyu people, and his confession would be recorded. Additionally, he would have to confess that he had sinned by taking the Mau Mau oath and renounce his belief in the organization. These confessions and renunciations were

also recorded and played to other prisoners in the camps. Because of the strong belief associated with oaths in Kikuyu culture, this had a profound effect on the reformed.

Young men were not the only focus of the counterinsurgency campaign in Kenya during the emergency. Women and young boys also played a role in the Mau Mau movement and the British saw them as a pool that the Mau Mau could some day draw from if something weren't done to preempt such recruitment. One social program implemented during the emergency was that of the Scouts. In 1953 Sir Geofery Rhodes, commissioner of the Scouts, was instrumental in convincing the government that Scouting was a superb method for steering young boys away from sex and politics and instilling in them a greater sense of community and loyalty to government. The government agreed, and Scouting was implemented throughout Kenya's schools as a tool of rehabilitation (Maloba, p. 145).

3. Land Ownership and Regulation Reforms

Given that one of the primary roots of Mau Mau was the squatter system and land ownership, one of the problems the British faced was that of agricultural labor in the White Highlands. The squatter system that was in place in much of the White Highlands during the 1950s closely mirrored the sharecropper concept the United States had implemented following the Civil War in the Southern States. A farmer and his family would be allowed to live on a white settler's farm, usually in a separated area, and permitted to raise some crops and graze a limited number of livestock in exchange for work performed for the settler. Also mentioned earlier were the methods used to obtain many of the farms in the White Highlands and the mismatch between the price paid for land and its worth. Many of the farms that the Kikuyu now found themselves farming were originally their own farms. Despite this, most relations between white settlers and Kikuyu squatters were peaceful, and the squatters were able to maintain a viable livelihood on their portions of land. Eventually, however, the colonial government began placing increasingly tighter and tighter restrictions on how much land a squatter family would be allowed to cultivate and how many livestock they were allowed to graze. These restrictions did not lead to corresponding increases in wages for agricultural work done and discontent grew (Leakey, p. 139).

Louis Leakey argued in 1954 that the squatter system was problematic and something else would have to be done in order to fix it. His suggestion was that African villages be established in and around the White Highlands where the Kikuyu could live and own property, at least in the form of houses. From these villages, that would be Kikuyu-run and operated, they could hire out their services as agricultural labor. Along with such villages and farm communities there would have to be a complete reform of the pay system so a Kikuyu could earn a sufficient livelihood (Leakey, p. 140).

One land reform practice that helped quell Mau Mau support was land consolidation. In the Central Province a massive land consolidation program was implemented, referred to as the Swynnerton Plan. The basic tenet of this plan was that communal land ownership would be replaced with a land tenure system. This new system would encourage an individual to invest his own time and labor in improving his land and, thereby profit from his own work, basically empowering the individual Kikuyu (Maloba, p. 144). Initially this program was intended to combat the Mau Mau outright. Land that belonged to Mau Mau members or supporters would be seized and consolidated. This was thought to be highly effective since seizure and loss of land was considered one of the most painful punishments that could be inflicted on a Kikuyu. According to Maloba, many of the detainees in the camps knew that these land seizures and consolidations would affect their land directly, and if they were not released to return to their farms, they would lose their land. They also understood that the only way to be released was to convince the guards that they had been reformed and had completed the “pipeline”; therefore, the land seizure and consolidation reform had a great impact on the rehabilitation of Mau Mau insurgents (Maloba, p. 144).

The land consolidation program also caused problems. The ahoi or landless peasants who lived in and around the white settlement were unable to afford to purchase land, and with the fragmented land ownership, they found themselves out of work. It was originally thought that with the new cash crops that were being grown on consolidated Kikuyu land, a “trickle down” effect would take place. But it did not. The government had underestimated the total number of landowners; therefore, many of the landless workers were jobless, hungry, and looking for answers, which in turn helped to fuel Mau Mau (Maloba, p. 149).

Though land reform was practiced throughout the Mau Mau emergency, no real solution was ever agreed upon by all parties involved. The land reforms, coupled with economic, religious, political, and social reforms would all help to defeat Mau Mau, but the desired goals of land reform were never entirely met.

B. THE BRITISH MILITARY RESPONSE

Counterinsurgency was nothing new to the British military. Due to the vast British interests throughout the world during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the British colonial empire had rapidly expanded. With this rapid colonial expansion came problems with the local population. These were primarily political, social, religious, or military. The Kenyan Emergency would be no different.

Maloba cites, for instance, John Pimlott who remarked,

that the “flexibility of response,” together with accumulated knowledge from the past, has been the chief reason for the British army’s relative success against insurgency since 1945. It is interesting to note that some of the key strategies used against the Malayan guerrillas and Mau Mau had been employed before against the Boers in South Africa (as cited in Maloba, p. 82).

Many of the British soldiers who would fight against the Mau Mau in Kenya were seasoned veterans of several conflicts. During the early 1950s the British Army was involved in operations in Malaya, Korea, Kenya, and had only recently left Palestine. Additionally, officers and men with more than seven years of active service had served in WWII. This would prove to be devastating to the Mau Mau who were not prepared for such a foe, but also this meant the whole situation in Kenya seemed rather minimal to the British military once they were on the ground. This is not to say, of course, that in the beginning the British military had a grasp on the situation preceding the emergency. Nor did they come in with a strategy for dealing with the Kenyan situation (Kitson, p. 13).

Initially the British military forces consisting of British troops (First Lancashire Fusiliers from the Canal Zone) as well as African Troops known as the King’s African Rifles or KAR (4th KAR from Uganda, 6th KAR from Tanganyika, and local KAR Battalions) would make up the majority of the forces on the ground in Kenya. During 1953 the British troops would primarily be in charge of the White Highlands, while the KAR troops would patrol and engage Mau Mau in the Central Province (Maloba, p. 82).

By the end of 1953 it became clear, due to continued attacks, that the patrols were not paying off and that both the British and African troops were unable to deliver any decisive victories against the Mau Mau. It was even becoming apparent that Mau Mau membership was increasing and that the problem was even more widespread than it was in early 1953 when the troops arrived (Maloba, p. 83).

British military intelligence was limited during the early stages of the war, but was starting to improve in late 1953 due to confessions from captured Mau Mau insurgents. Additionally, a huge intelligence score was realized when, in January 1954, Wahuhiu Itote or General China was captured. General China was the most senior ranking Mau Mau guerrilla at the time and was in charge of the Mau Mau guerrillas on and around Mount Kenya. He was interrogated for 68 hours and was convinced he would die. According to Maloba, he was originally reluctant to provide any information but as the interrogation went on he eventually revealed much about his “sphere of influence” and the location of his headquarters on Mount Kenya (as cited in Maloba, p. 84). Not only did he reveal the location of his area of operations, but also he revealed the identities of members of his committee and the structure of the Mau Mau organization (Maloba, p. 85). For the next several months the British intelligence agencies would gather and analyze information for an eventual assault on the heart of the Mau Mau organization.

In April 1954 Operation Anvil was launched, primarily focused on Nairobi, and consisting of cordoning off the city and searching out all “undesirable” Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru people. These persons were rounded up, searched, documented, and most were shipped off to rehabilitation camps at MacKinon Road and Manyani (Maloba p. 86).

1. Loyalists and the Home Guards

The Home Guards and the Loyalists were integral to the British counterinsurgency strategy. The British understood that they would not be able to defeat the Mau Mau alone, a valuable lesson learned from previous counterinsurgency operations. The British had established the Kikuyu Home Guards prior to the declaration of the emergency and had maintained the organization as a means to use native troops to defeat Mau Mau. Home Guards were originally formed as an opposition force to protect villages from attack and to assist police and military in operations against the Mau Mau (Anderson, p. 6). Mau Mau loathed the Home Guards. The British understood that in

order to defeat Mau Mau, largely comprised of Kikuyu, they would have to divide the population pit the factions against one another, and this is exactly what the formation of the Home Guards did. As the struggle against Mau Mau escalated, the intelligence gained from Home Guard personnel proved invaluable, and they helped ensure that Mau Mau influence would not take hold in untouched areas or even in areas where potential recruits might exist.

Another aspect of the Home Guard program is that it somewhat mirrors the Strategic Hamlet program implemented by the U.S. during Vietnam. According to Maloba, the Home Guards prevented Mau Mau from spreading, but also limited Mau Mau capability to intimidate and recruit from the local population. The Home Guards outnumbered Mau Mau insurgents and acted as security forces in Kikuyu villages. As with the Strategic Hamlet program, this greatly increased the power of the Home Guards, but almost also completely stamped out Mau Mau influence in these areas.

The use of the Home Guards did create some problems, however. Widespread corruption and extortion were rampant in many of the Home Guard units. For the most part, the colonial government would either turn a blind eye or, in some cases, defend members of the Home Guards as long as they were hunting down and capturing or killing Mau Mau insurgents. By 1955 the Home Guard corruption had gotten somewhat out of control and pressure on the colonial government from London to do something forced the government amnesty of 1955. This amnesty would affect both Mau Mau and the Home Guard alike. It would protect the Home Guards from prosecution that was being insisted upon by the government in London, and it would give Mau Mau insurgents a chance to surrender. Approximately 1,000 guerillas would surrender under this amnesty before the final British offensive in late 1955 (Maloba, p. 94).

2. Pseudo-Gangs

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the British counterinsurgency campaign in Kenya was the implementation of the pseudo-gangs. The pseudo-gang idea was not unique to Kenya and had been used in other counterinsurgency operations by the British, though Kenya provides us with the most successful examples of employment of the gangs.

Pseudo-gangs were formed between 1953 and 1955 and were made up of groups of reformed Mau Mau enlisted by the colonial government to hunt down and kill or capture their former Mau Mau brethren. The pseudo-gang concept, developed by Frank Kitson at the Special Methods Training Centre he established in 1954, turned out to be an extraordinarily successful idea (Thompson, 2002, p. 164). The gangs were organized and supported by the Commander-In-Chief in Kenya, Lieutenant General Sir Gerald Lathbury, and were under the tactical leadership of individuals like Ian Henderson, the man who would eventually capture Mau Mau leader Dedan Kimathi, Eric Holyoak, and seconded field intelligence officer, Frank Kitson (Beckett, 2001, p. 127). Originally the pseudo-gangs were made up of reformed Mau Mau, loyalist Kikuyu, and white soldiers disguised in “black face” working together to target Mau Mau leadership. Eventually the white soldiers were removed completely, and the gangs operated with only white supervision (Thompson, 164). Leroy Thompson suggests in his 2002 book, *The Counterinsurgency Manual*, that the reason pseudo-gangs worked so well in Kenya was due to poor command and control between the Mau Mau groups, making it extremely difficult for the Mau Mau to tell friend from foe. He also argues that by 1956 pseudo-gangs had become so successful that they were capturing or killing, on average, 22 Mau Mau insurgents per week (Thompson, p. 168). David Anderson claims that by June of 1954, the pseudo-gang techniques were showing remarkable results in the Kiambu and Thika areas and played a pivotal role in hunting down Mau Mau leaders and members in the time leading up to operation Anvil. Anderson also argues that, “Through to the end of the war, the pseudo-gangs proved to be the most potent weapon in tracking down Mau Mau” (Anderson, p. 285).

As stated earlier the pseudo-gang concept worked extremely well for not only targeting Mau Mau operatives, but also intelligence-gathering and counter-leadership targeting. According to Anderson, by 1956 the pseudo-gangs had accounted for the capture of the vast majority of Mau Mau leaders, though the most sought after leader, Dedan Kimathi, continued to elude them. Kimathi was still at large somewhere in the Aberdares forest above Nyeri (see Figure 3) and around Mount Kenya (Anderson, p. 286). Ian Henderson would eventually be the man to hunt down and capture Kimathi by, with, and through his native pseudo-gang troops. Henderson built a team of more than a

dozen former Mau Mau members over the course of several months, solely for the purpose of hunting down Kimathi. During the training and buildup of this force, Henderson's team would destroy multiple Mau Mau hideouts in and around Kimathi's area of operations. Eventually, on 21 October 1956, Henderson's pseudo-gang members would corner Kimathi, four years to the day after the declaration of the Kenyan Emergency in 1952. Ironically, Kimathi managed to escape the trap, but in attempting to flee through the forest, he ran directly into Henderson and tribal policemen at 9:30 am. With the last of the Mau Mau leadership captured, the forest war of Kenya was considered over, though an end to the emergency would not be declared for an additional four years (Anderson, p. 288).

Wunyabari Maloba argues that the utilization of former guerillas within pseudo-gangs was a “propaganda coup for the government and an economic strategy for the army.” The British government was able to successfully turn guerilla against guerilla and with the military and economic support from the superior British government the outcome was predictable (Maloba, p. 96).

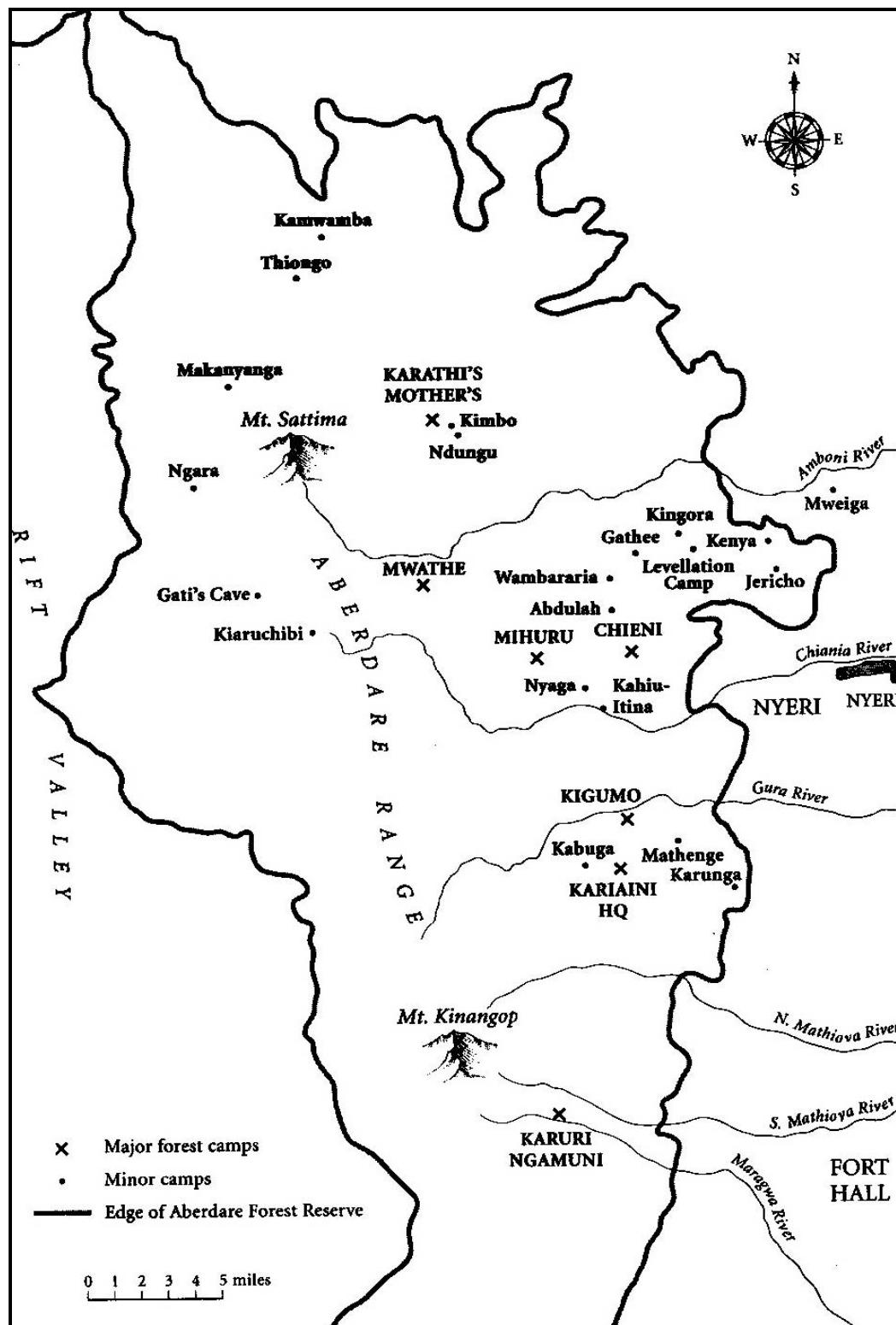


Figure 4. The forest camps of the Aberdares (Ian Henderson/Pseudo-gang's areas of operations). From *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, by David Anderson, 2005. Copyright W.W. Norton and Co. 2005. Reprinted with permission.

IV. RESULTS OF BRITISH COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS IN KENYA

A. OUTCOME OF THE BRITISH COUNTERINSURGENCY AND REFORM EFFORTS

1. Political Reform and Associated Results in Kenya

Perhaps the most resounding results of the British counterinsurgency effort in Kenya were political reform and decolonization. Although at the time the British were rapidly pulling back from their overseas colonies, they determined that decolonization of Kenya would not occur until the country was stable enough to survive and prosper on its own and all Mau Mau influence was defeated.

Even though the Kenyan Emergency would officially continue into 1960, the majority of fighting and most counterinsurgency efforts were showing results by the mid-1950s. It was in 1955 that approval was granted for the formation of new African political parties. The parties were to be controlled, however, to prevent any possibility of a reemergence of the problems associated with the KAU or KCA. These new political parties would be established at the district level and, later, at an unspecified date, would be allowed to meet at the national level. These district political parties did have problems such as a tendency to focus on parochial and tribal issues, rather than political issues, but they were moving in the right direction. There were also problems such as an uneven distribution of Africans to Europeans sitting at the national level of government. Due to this uneven distribution, the African representatives caused a constitutional crisis, which resulted in the development of the Lennox-Boyd Constitution of 1958. The new constitution gave Africans six more seats on the council, bringing to 33 the number of African seats out of a total of 65 (Maloba, p. 153). Along with the addition of new African seats came the transfer of 185,000 acres of land from white settlers to African farmers with backing from the World Bank. In light of these new developments many settlers simply cut their losses and left the country.

In 1961, after years in prison for supposedly being the leader of the Mau Mau revolts, Jomo Kenyatta appeared at a press conference where he denied any affiliation with Mau Mau and denied that he felt any resentment toward Europeans or the British

government. Kenyatta also professed that he had no affiliation with Communism and that the Communist Party had no place in African culture or politics (Maloba, p. 158). After being released from prison in 1959, and later released from probation in August 1961, Kenyatta began acquiring support from both native Africans as well as prominent settlers who were caught in the middle of the land battles that were occurring due to British repatriation of land to the Africans. In August of 1963, Kenyatta addressed approximately three hundred white settlers in the Nakuru area and explained to them that their land would not be reacquired and that they were free to stay and continue helping the new Kenyan government in its nation-building efforts (Maloba, p. 166). Eventually the attitudes of the white settlers still living in Kenya began to shift toward Kenyatta. At one time many swore they would not live under the rule of a man many perceived to be the leader of the Mau Mau revolt and a revolutionary at heart. However, after Kenyatta extended a welcome to the Europeans, denounced Mau Mau and Communism, and asked all to forgive the past, many Europeans began to believe that Kenyatta as president would not be such a bad thing.

During the 1963 elections Kenyatta's Kenyan African National Union (KANU) seized a majority of the vote with 83 seats out of 124. On June 1st 1963, Madarada Day, Jomo Kenyatta, a man once thought to be the leader of Mau Mau, became Prime Minister of the autonomous government of Kenya. On December 12th 1963 Kenya took control of its own foreign affairs and thus completed its path to independence. During the ceremony that accompanied the monumental event at Ruringu Stadium, the last of the Mau Mau resistance fighters handed over their weapons to Kenyatta (Kenya Safari Guide, p. 4).

Following independence some sections of the population would continue to feel neglected while it appeared that others were reaping the benefits on the backs of the workers and from the positions they held in government. In 1966, the articulated socialist party KPU was formed. Wunyabari Maloba brings to light a point of interest that at the time the KPU was formed, Kenyatta and his advisors initiated a massive oath-taking campaign among the Kikuyu in Kenya. These oaths had Kikuyu swearing allegiance to the Kenyan flag and to maintain Kikuyu superiority in political administration, economics, commerce, and land acquisition. Maloba points out that many of those who

took the oath were ex-detainees, many of whom had not benefited since Kenyan independence in 1963 (Maloba, p. 168).

2. Results of Land Reform in Kenya

Soil conservation and rehabilitation of eroded areas were beneficial to the Kikuyu farmers economically, but socially they caused some minor problems by putting people, specifically women, out of work. The second land reform was a more efficient use of cash crops once off limits to Kikuyu farmers. And the third reform was land consolidation. As stated earlier, the land consolidation program would tie together individual parcels of land that were scattered over a wide area. The thinking was that this would allow the more efficient use of land, and non-land owners would be able to establish villages from which they would work the land of the owners. The land consolidation program was fraught with corruption at the national level, and even though many members of the new Legislative Counsel saw the economic benefit of the consolidation program, they were also aware of the corruption that permeated the program. A special committee was set up to investigate these abuses, and the committee even went so far as to title the program a “Child of the Emergency”. It was feared by the British that this program would come under fire from nationalistic Africans after the Emergency. The program would persist, however, due largely to political changes adopted in 1960 given African majority rule in government and the gradual removal of land restrictions in the White Highlands. Both the removal of use barriers and British economic aid to maintain land values in the Highlands would help to reduce the pressure on the reserves (Kenya Safari Guide, 2004, p. 3).

B. MILITARY RESULTS AND STATISTICS

By 1955 the majority of the violence associated with the Mau Mau revolt had ended. Of the approximately 120,000 partisans who had been members of Mau Mau, approximately 15,000 were still alive and free and, in October of 1956 when Mau Mau militant leader Dedan Kimathi was killed, only thirteen loyal Mau Mau members were by his side (Kenyan Safari Guide, p. 2)

There is no doubt that the British answer to the Mau Mau revolt was heavy handed; however, the military handling of the situation, possibly because of the harshness, appears to have been extremely effective. Interrogations and beatings in

camps appear to have been commonplace, and even village elders were used to get the accused to confess. Forced labor in the camps was widely employed as a method to get individuals to seek reform. In the case of the Hola detention camp, 11 detainees were killed and between 22 and 60 injured by guards attempting to force an uncooperative group of Kikuyu to work. There were even reports that the native troops or Home Guards used pliers to castrate Mau Mau prisoners. Whatever the method and level of brutality, by the latter half of the 1950s most Kikuyu had turned against the Mau Mau (World History, 2004, p. 3)

The military results of the British war against the Mau Mau in Kenya were no doubt bloody (see Table 3). Following the death of Kimathi in 1957 and the official declaration of the end of the Emergency in December 1960 the British released the following statistics:

Table 3. Security Force and Loyal Civilian Casualties of the Kenyan Emergency

<i>Security Forces Casualties</i>	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>
European	63	101
Asian	3	12
African	101	1,469

Loyal Civilians

European	32	26
Asian	26	36
African	916	1,819

Source: Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau (The Corfield Report) (HMSO, 1960), p. 136 (as cited in Maloba, p. 96).

Mau Mau insurgent casualties were as follows:

- 11,503 Mau Mau insurgents killed
- 1,035 Mau Mau insurgents captured wounded
- 1, 550 Mau Mau insurgents captured in action
- 26,625 Mau Mau arrested
- 2, 714 Mau Mau surrendered (Maloba, p. 96).

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE COUNTERINSURGENCY OPTIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT BRITISH REFORM EFFORTS

It is clear that the British reform efforts in the areas of land ownership, education, religion, and social/cultural practices played significant roles in the defeat of the Mau Mau in Kenya during the Emergency. The British settlers and leadership understood that without significant reforms in these areas, any military solution was doomed to fail, and the eventual turnover of Kenya to the new African government would not have been possible, at least in the manner in which the British preferred.

As discussed earlier, probably the most contested issues were land ownership and economic freedom. The land consolidation reforms in June of 1956 worked to divide the middle-class African landowners and the landless laborers, and, therefore, drove many Kikuyu to side with the colonial government. This may not have been completely in the best interests of the Kikuyu peasant farmer, but it did serve to aid in the reduction of Mau Mau sympathizers and strengthened the British stance against the insurgency. Additionally, relaxed restrictions on Africans growing cash crops, originally put in place to drive up the value of such crops, aided in gaining support from African farmers by greatly increasing small-farmer income throughout the final years of the insurgency. The economic reforms that took place in the urban areas also aided in the defeat of the Mau Mau insurgency. Following Operation Anvil, which targeted Kikuyu in urban areas, wages in these areas were raised which helped to strengthen moderate Kikuyu organizations such as the KFRTU and, therefore, undermined those sympathetic to Mau Mau (Wikipedia, 2004).

I would argue that most insurgencies in the past century were fueled by either true or perceived inequalities in economic freedoms. This was probably nowhere more true than in those colonial areas where the occupying power took freely and gave little in return. Of the colonial powers, the British were probably less guilty of this than others, but again, even a perceived inequality may be enough to fuel the fires of insurgency. To properly combat this problem, the population must be targeted and made to believe that the occupying power is there in their best economic interests. The war of ideas often

starts in the pockets of the population you are attempting to influence, and if it is possible to make them feel they are better off because of your presence, they will be much more likely to support you and less likely to support the insurgents. Insurgencies cost money and lives, and I would argue if the population is content with their level of living, they will be much less likely to take up arms for a cause that may cost them their homes, money, family, and/or lives.

Reforms in education also played a significant role in the defeat of the Mau Mau. Originally the British thought closing African missionary schools would help defeat the insurgency. It quickly became apparent that by doing so, many young Kikuyu were displaced and without the education for which they hungered. The lack of educational opportunities helped to fuel the insurgency and it became apparent to the British that closing educational facilities was hugely counterproductive.

Insurgencies are most often conducted by young men who are out of work, economically impoverished, and uneducated. That is not to say that the leadership of many insurgencies is uneducated. On the contrary, many leaders are highly educated. However, the muscle of the insurgency is often made up of young men who, if given better options (school and work), would not choose to participate in insurgent acts. Education must be made available to young men and women not only to reduce the chances they will participate in insurgent activities, but also to ensure a greater standard of living which ties back to economic well-being and fewer reasons to retaliate against established governments, with the assumption the government is legitimate and operating in the best interest of those whom it governs.

Social and political reforms likewise played significant roles in the defeat of the Mau Mau. The British understood they were eventually going to turn sovereignty of Kenya over to Africans and began to incorporate more and more natives into the decision-making processes of government. By 1956 the colonial government in Kenya had allowed the direct election of Africans to the Legislative Committee and increased the number of seats on the Committee from twelve to fourteen. Additionally, in a Parliamentary conference in 1960, the British stated that they would accept a one-person, one-vote majority rule for Kenya (Wikipedia, 2004).

Again, in order to win the war of ideas and solidify support for any counter-insurgency campaign the greater population must be targeted and made to feel they are better off today than they were yesterday. Additionally, they must be made to feel they have a voice in their own futures. Many of the insurgencies of the 20th century were spawned by the perception that the native peoples did not have a chance to determine their own futures; any counterinsurgency campaign must take this into consideration and respond accordingly. The local population must be involved in the decision-making processes that are going to affect their futures and, if possible, members of the greater population should elect their own leaders. It is from this greater population that either human capital and support for the government or support for the insurgency is drawn.

Along with the political reforms that occurred as a result of the Mau Mau insurgency, it also became clear that social reforms were necessary. The British, like most colonial powers of the time, felt it was their responsibility to “civilize” and bring into the modern world those native peoples who inhabited the lands they conquered. Along with this notion of “manifest destiny” came drastic changes to social and religious customs, beliefs, and practices that had been in place possibly for thousands of years. The first settlers and missionaries arrived in Kenya and began to “civilize” the Kikuyu and other tribes both by educating them and insisting they follow the white man’s God, and by outlawing traditional customs such as female circumcision and certain oathing practices. At first the local tribes tolerated this, and some of these changes remain to this day; however, these changes provided fuel for the Mau Mau when recruiting for the insurgency was in full swing.

To garner support from a local population, the local traditions and customs must be respected. If the population understands that the counterinsurgency force is not trying to change their belief structure and way of life, they will be much more likely to support any outside influence. Along the same lines, if the insurgency cannot use the propaganda of “outsiders are trying to change the way we live,” it is much more difficult for them to find elements of support for their movement.

B. CONCLUSIONS ON BRITISH AND KENYAN MILITARY EFFORTS

The British military response to the Kenyan Emergency may have been slow initially, but once set in motion, it succeeded on multiple levels. Many will argue that the

British wrote the book on counterinsurgency with successful campaigns in Malaya and Palestine, and the military response in Kenya was no different. Working closely by, with, and through the local population and local armed forces, the British ensured that the Mau Mau insurgency was doomed to failure and the Kikuyu really only put up a moderate fight in the early years of the insurgency.

From the first acts of violence through 1953, the British (1st Lancashire Fusiliers) and 1st and 4th King's African Rifle regiments from Uganda and Tanganyika, accompanied by various local police and armed forces showed little progress in dealing with the insurgent problem. Rather than continuing to use the methods that were proving relatively useless, a review of the situation, methods being used, and chain of command was conducted. In May 1953 General Sir George Erskine was installed as the commander-in-chief of all armed forces in Kenya, and radical changes began to take place. Restriction of movement was implemented in Kikuyu, Meru, and Embu areas, especially in the urban areas. Intense interrogation of captured Mau Mau and the use of trained spies and informants began to produce large amounts of actionable intelligence. Intense military operations, including Operation Anvil, in the urban areas of Nairobi and Mombassa began to turn up scores of insurgents. The use of detainment and re-education camps for captured militants proved to be extremely useful in rehabilitating Mau Mau insurgents, and for gaining extensive intelligence on the Mau Mau through insurgent confessions. The British use of the Home Guards, who were local forces, also proved to be extremely useful. Using and at the same time, empowering local troops proved more successful than deploying British or foreign KAR troops. Some problems of corruption occurred through this practice, but overall the Home Guard were eventually credited with 42% of total Mau Mau insurgent kills. Perhaps the most successful practice employed by the British was the use of pseudo-gangs during the second half of the 1950s. Led by Ian Hamilton, the gangs of "reformed" Mau Mau proved to be extremely useful in hunting down and capturing or killing Mau Mau insurgents, and eventually led to the capture of Dedan Kimathi in October of 1956, after which the emergency was essentially over.

Several lessons can be learned from the British military efforts in Kenya. By training, advising, equipping (to an extent) and empowering the local troops to settle their own problems and determine their own future, the British turned the insurgency into a

relatively toothless animal that would fail within a decade. Many of the lessons can and should be applied to modern-day counterinsurgency campaigns, which is to say that the Kenyan Emergency took place in modern times. For instance, in Iraq if the Untied States' intention truly is to establish a viable government and return full control to the Iraqi people, there can be no other answer than to use local troops to determine their own destiny. The use of pseudo-gangs in Iraq may be one option for defeating the Sunni insurgents. If it were possible to reeducate captured Sunni insurgents, promise them well-being or even a reward for the eventual defeat of their fellow insurgents, and then use them militarily to defeat the insurgency, the benefits might be similar to those the British experienced in a relatively short period of time in Kenya.

Other aspects of the Kenyan counterinsurgency campaign could likewise be modified for use in Iraq and elsewhere; however, the force implementing the solutions must get beyond the politically correctness that has plagued our military efforts. Many of the British solutions in Kenya would be seen as hard-handed and un-PC in today's world, but insurgencies are brutal and violent and must be fought against with the same fervor with which they are conducted. Detention of insurgents, restrictions on free movement of civilian populations, and widespread identification projects would all add to the eventual defeat of the Iraqi, or any other insurgency, and would have minimal impact on innocent civilians, which is not to say that it would have no impact.

The Kenyan Emergency is an under-appreciated and under-studied example of a successful counterinsurgency campaign. Several aspects separate the Mau Mau problem from other insurgencies. Yet, one could say no two insurgencies are even closely alike and all must be fought differently. Even with the differences between the Kenyan Emergency and others, appropriate modification of lessons learned can and should be applied. We must be able to face such conflicts, which are likely to continue and even increase in the future with some type of "flexible" model for success. Understanding the type of conflict one is fighting and using whatever methods are available and necessary to win are vital aspects to prevailing in any conflict, and low-intensity conflict is no different.

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APPENDIX: TIMELINE: KENYAN EMERGENCY AND ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

The following timeline is from the About African History Guide Website <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/Mau-Mau-Timeline.htm> and is reprinted in its entirety with permission from Alstair Boddy-Evans (About African History's Africa Guide). Retrieved April 27th, 2005.

August 1951

Information is filtering back about secret meetings being held in the forests outside Nairobi. A secret society called the Mau Mau, believed to have been started in the previous year, requires its members to take an oath to drive the white man from Kenya. Intelligence suggests that membership of the Mau Mau is currently restricted to members of the Kikuyu tribe, many of whom have been arrested during burglaries in Nairobi's white suburbs.

24 August 1952

The Kenyan government imposes a curfew in three districts on the outskirts of Nairobi where gangs of arsonists, believed to be members of the Mau Mau, have been setting fire to homes of Africans who refuse to take the Mau Mau oath.

7 October 1952

Senior Chief Waruhui is assassinated in Kenya -- he is speared to death in broad daylight on a main road on the outskirts of Nairobi. He had recently spoken out against increasing Mau Mau aggression against colonial rule.

19 October 1952

The British government announces that it is to send troops to Kenya to help the fight against the Mau Mau.

21 October 1952

With the imminent arrival of British troops, the Kenyan government declares a state of emergency following a month of increasing hostility. Over 40 people have been murdered in Nairobi in the last four weeks and the Mau Mau, officially declared terrorists, have acquired firearms to use along with the more traditional pangas. As part of the overall clamp down Jomo Kenyatta, president of the Kenya African Union, is arrested for alleged Mau Mau involvement.

30 October 1952

British troops are involved in the arrest of over 500 suspected Mau Mau activists.

14 November 1952

Thirty-four schools in Kikuyu tribal areas are closed in the continuing clamp down on Mau Mau activists.

18 November 1952

Jomo Kenyatta, president of the Kenya African Union and the country's leading nationalist leader is charged with managing the Mau Mau terrorist society in Kenya. He is flown to a remote district station, Kapenguria, which reportedly has no telephone or rail communications with the rest of Kenya, and is being held there incommunicado.

25 November 1952

The Mau Mau has declared open rebellion against British rule in Kenya. British forces respond by arresting over 2000 Kikuyu suspected of Mau Mau membership.

18 January 1953

Governor-general Sir Evelyn Baring imposes the death penalty for anyone who administers the Mau Mau oath - the oath is often forced upon Kikuyu tribesmen at the point of a knife, and calls for the individual's death if he fails to kill a European farmer when ordered.

26 January 1953

Panic has spread through Europeans in Kenya after the slaying of a white settler farmer and his family. Settler groups, displeased with the government's response to the increasing Mau Mau threat, have created their own Commando Units to deal with the threat. Sir Evelyn Baring, the Governor-general of Kenya has announced that a new offensive is to begin under the command of Major-General William Hinde. Amongst those speaking out against the Mau Mau threat and the government's inaction is Elspeth Huxley, author (who wrote *The Flame Trees of Thika* in 1959), who in a recent newspaper article compares Jomo Kenyatta to Hitler.

1 April 1953

British troops kill twenty-four Mau Mau suspects and capture an additional thirty-six during deployments in the Kenyan highlands.

8 April 1953

Jomo Kenyatta, known to his followers as Burning the Spear, is sentenced to seven years hard labour along with five other Kikuyu currently detained at Kapenguria.

17 April 1953

An additional 1000 Mau Mau suspects have been arrested over the past week around the capital Nairobi.

3 May 1953

Nineteen Kikuyu members of the Home Guard are murdered by the Mau Mau.

29 May 1953

Kikuyu tribal lands are to be cordoned off from the rest of Kenya to restrict movement of potential Mau Mau terrorists.

July 1953

Another 100 Mau Mau suspects have been killed during British patrols in Kikuyu tribal lands.

15 January 1954

General China, the second in command of the Mau Mau's military efforts, is wounded and captured by British troops.

9 March 1954

Two more Mau Mau leaders have been secured: General Katanga is captured and General Tanganyika surrenders to British authority.

March 1954

The great British plan to end the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya is presented to the country's legislature -- General China, captured in January, is to write to the other terrorist leaders suggesting that nothing further can be gained from the conflict and that they should surrender themselves to British troops waiting in the Aberdare foothills.

11 April 1954

British authorities in Kenya admit that the 'General China operation' revealed previously to the Kenyan legislature has failed.

24 April 1954

Over 40,000 Kikuyu tribesmen are arrested by British forces, including 5000 Imperial troops and 1000 Policemen, during widespread, coordinated dawn raids.

26 May 1954

The Treetops Hotel, where Princess Elizabeth and her husband were staying when they heard of King George VI's death and her succession to the throne of England, is burnt down by Mau Mau activists.

18 January 1955

The Governor-General of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring, offers an amnesty to Mau Mau activists -- the offer means that they will not face the death penalty, but may still be imprisoned for their crimes. European settlers are up in arms at the leniency of the offer.

21 April 1955

Unmoved by Kenya's Governor-General's, Sir Evelyn Baring, offer of amnesty the Mau Mau killings continue -- today two English schoolboys are murdered.

10 June 1955

Britain withdraws the offer of amnesty to the Mau Mau.

24 June 1955

With the amnesty withdrawn, British authorities in Kenya can proceed with the death sentence for nine Mau Mau activists implicated in the death of two English schoolboys.

October 1955

Official reports suggest that over 70,000 Kikuyu tribesmen suspected of Mau Mau membership have been imprisoned, whilst over 13,000 people have been killed (by British troops and Mau Mau activists) over the last three years of the Mau Mau Rebellion.

7 January 1956

The official death toll for Mau Mau activists killed by British forces in Kenya since 1952 is put at 10,173.

5 February 1956

Nine Mau Mau activists escape from Mageta island prison camp in Lake Victoria.

July 1959

The deaths of 11 Mau Mau activists held at Hola Camp in Kenya is cited as part of the British opposition attacks on the UK government over its role in Africa.

10 November 1959

The state of emergency is ended in Kenya.

18 January 1960

The Kenyan Constitutional Conference being held in London is boycotted by African nationalist leaders.

18 April 1961

In return for the release of Jomo Kenyatta, African nationalist leaders agree to take a role in Kenya's government.

14 July 1961

Jomo Kenyatta, now aged 71, is finally released from house arrest in Gatundu, 22 kilometres outside Nairobi.

21 August 1961

All restrictions on Jomo Kenyatta's movements are lifted following his release from prison last month.

27 May 1963

Jomo Kenyatta is elected prime minister in Kenya's first multi-racial elections.

12 December 1963

Kenya becomes the 34th African state to achieve independence.

16 December 1963

General amnesty is announced for Mau Mau activists.

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